system of defined benefit pension, was notified on 22nd December, 2003. the new system was implemented with effect from 1st January, 2004. The monthly contribution in the new pension system by the employee is 10% of the salary and DA. a matching contribution is given by the Central Government.

Increase in customs duty on steel

2310. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that steel industry has demanded increase in customs duty on steel;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefore, and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM). (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Some representations have been received from certain steel manufacturers, requesting for increase in rate of customs duty on steel, as domestic manufacturers are disadvantaged. They have *inter-alia* referred to higher costs of some of their inputs and increase in imports of certain steel products.

(c) Taking into consideration all relevant points, Government have not agreed to the requests for increase in basic customs duty on steel.

Credit to agriculture sector

2311. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that RBI has set up an Expert Group to formulate the necessary strategy for raising investment with a view to increasing credit to the agriculture sector by 30 per cent;

(b) whether the Report of the Expert Group, which was supposed to submit its report in May, 2005 has submitted its report;

(c) if so, what are the salient features of the report; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) yes, Sir. Reserve Bank of India had set up an "Expert Group on Investment Credit to Agriculture" under the

Chairmanship of Shri Y.S.P. Thorat, Managing Director, NABARD, in January 2005. The group was set up to examine the nature and magnitude of the problem and evolve a strategy for increasing investment in Agriculture. The group has submitted its report in June 2005. The group has analysed the trends of inflow and the constrains in flow of investment credit and has drawn out a road map for accelerating the flow of investment credit to Agriculture. The various measures suggested by the group, *inter-alia*, include the following:-

Computerisation of land records and exploring the possibility by the State Governments for simplification of procedures for creation of charge on land/crops.

Active support of State Government for recovery of bank loans.

Reforms in Agriculture marketing.

Improving credit absorption capacity.

Designing appropriate products for financing rural infrastructure.

Strengthening the supplementary Banking Mechanism for increasing the banking outreach in rural areas.

Efficient water management.

Integrating short term credit with term credit.

Risk mitigation measures.

Location specific strategies for increasing the flow of credit.

Financing value chain.

Contribution made in National Relief Fund to Banks

2312. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the Public Sector banks which receive contributions made by the public to the Prime Minister's National Relief Funds;

(b) whether Government would consider the desirability to authorize all the branches of the Public Sector Bank in the country to receive contributions to the Fund which would be in the interest of both the Fund and the citizens; and

(c) if so, by when the necessary orders in this regard are likely to be issued?